



## BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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### Analysis

Carter-John Paul Meeting:

A Church-State Watershed

By Stan Haste

WASHINGTON (BP)--Just 20 years ago the scene would have been politically unthinkable--the president of the United States welcoming the head of the Roman Catholic Church to the White House.

In 1960, when he was running for president, Roman Catholic candidate John F. Kennedy found strong resistance to his candidacy on account of his religion, particularly among Baptists in the south. He felt compelled to defuse the church-state issue at the eleventh hour by pledging to Baptist ministers in Houston that if elected he would bend over backwards to avoid even the appearance of impropriety in relationship with his church.

The most often voiced of those fears was that somehow a Catholic president would inevitably pay obeisance to the pope in Rome.

To his credit, John Kennedy kept his promises in the church-state field and presumably destroyed forever the myth that a Catholic president couldn't be his own person.

Another major factor permitted Carter, who had to deal with the issue of his Southern Baptist beliefs in his campaign, to invite Pope John Paul II for their dramatic meeting at 1600 Pennsylvania Ave.

It began to develop shortly after Kennedy's assassination. John XXIII, another expansive pope, had convened the Second Vatican Council in 1962. At its conclusion three years later after four sessions, its products included a Declaration on Religious Freedom, which for the first time put the Roman Catholic Church on record in support of a principle held dear by Baptists throughout their history.

Despite the importance of the contributions of John XXIII and John Kennedy, however, a compelling argument can be made that it took Jimmy Carter, the Southern Baptist deacon and Sunday School teacher, to bring the pope to the White House.

Some commentators will no doubt argue that the president's primary motivation was political, that at a time when his own popularity was at an all-time low he invited the popular pontiff in order to bask in his presence.

But while the obvious political advantage to Carter, particularly among America's 50 million Catholics, cannot be ignored, the fact remains that the president believed that inviting the pope would not hurt him politically.

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The occasion itself was impressive. While the first family and Vice President and Mrs. Walter F. Mondale waited under the north portico of the stately mansion, the pope's limousine turned off Pennsylvania Avenue with the roar of the street-side crowd in the background to make the short drive around the north White House grounds. On seeing his hosts, he waved to them with his now characteristic, hands-uplifted gesture. The greetings included a kiss for Amy Carter.

On the north lawn, the president, with nearly 1,500 dignitaries which included members of the cabinet and congress and justices of the Supreme Court, greeted the pope in Polish: "May God be praised!"

"You have moved us as a champion of dignity and decency for every human being," the president declared, "and as a pilgrim for peace among nations."

In his response, the pope quickly made what was obviously for him and the president a key point. "It is indeed a great honor for me to meet with the president of the United States," he said in his precise, grammatically-perfect English, "during a visit of which the aims are spiritual and religious in nature."

At no point during his week-long visit which culminated in Washington did John Paul speak in his role as head of the Vatican State. Had he done so, the church-state implications could not have been healthy.

In a second ceremony, this one on the south lawn after a 45-minute meeting of the two men in the oval office, the spiritual nature of the pontiff's visit was dramatically underscored, first by a rendition of "The Lord's Prayer" by the Metropolitan Opera's Leontyne Price.

As he had done in his earlier remarks, Carter alluded to America's implementation of the principle of separation of church and state. Yet, he declared, "Our nation was not founded to deny human beings a life of the spirit, but to welcome the spiritual into our lives--and I join all Americans in welcoming Pope John Paul with open hearts into the lives of a free nation. You are welcome with us, your holiness."

The president went on, "Our America was founded to give a home to all who sought religious freedom. For us today, freedom of religion is not just a valued relic of a bygone age, or of national pride, it is a practical necessity for our nation's forward course."

He spoke of the pope's mission in America as primarily "pastoral." As if to underscore the point, he turned to John Paul to ask if he agreed. The pontiff, who championed religious freedom as a bishop in communist-controlled Poland, replied simply, "You are right."

For his part, the pope chose to address most of his remarks to the issues of disarmament and human rights. By urging the consummation of arms control agreements among nations, he all but endorsed the SALT II treaty now threatened with death in the U.S. Senate. That was the closest he came to inserting himself into internal U.S. political debates.

But the most dramatic moment, and the one which best capsulized the care with which both men treated the sensitive church-state implications of the visit, was saved for last.

After finishing his remarks and stepping aside to acknowledge the prolonged ovation of the 6,000 invited guests, pope and president whispered to each other. Suddenly, unexpectedly, John Paul approached the podium again. "With the permission of the president of the United States," he said, "I will offer a blessing."

And then, on a stunningly beautiful October afternoon in Washington, standing behind the seal of the presidency, he did just that.

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NOTE TO EDITORS: Baptist Press will soon send a report analyzing the pope's visit, written by George Sheridan of the SBC Home Mission Board's department of interfaith witness, as a follow-up to the church-state analysis by Stan Hasteley.

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Iowa Sets Sights  
On Convention Status

Baptist Press  
10/9/79

BETTENDORF, Iowa (BP)--The Iowa Southern Baptist Fellowship, in annual meeting at First Baptist Church, Bettendorf, adopted the largest budget in its history, received reports of consistent growth, and set a target date for achieving full status as a state Baptist convention.

The fellowship adopted a budget of some \$400,000, including anticipated receipts from Iowa churches of \$146,673, of which 17.25 percent will go to the national Southern Baptist Cooperative Program in 1980. The 1980 budget anticipates a 30 percent increase in state Cooperative Program receipts from churches over the 1979 budget.

With 64 churches and chapels and some 8,679 members, the Iowa Fellowship hopes to organize in October 1982 to begin operations as a state convention on Jan. 1, 1983. Currently, 34 state Baptist conventions cover work of Southern Baptists in all 50 states.

The organization as a convention will take place only if the Iowa Fellowship, now affiliated with the Missouri Baptist Convention, achieves 70 churches with 10,000 members with an average 10 percent gifts to missions.

In a prepared statement to the fellowship in annual session, A. Wilson Parker, executive director, emphasized that the priority continue to be reaching people and that the convention status should be a result of starting churches where they are needed to reach people.

Parker also noted that the Iowa Fellowship has experienced growth in every area of measurable success. Program enrollments in the local churches, as well as total membership, averaged a consistent growth of seven to eight percent in 1979. The brightest spot in the year of growth was a 35 percent increase in baptisms reported by the churches, he said.

Officers elected for 1980 are president, Claude McFerron of Waterloo, Iowa; vice president, Bob Tolliver of Ankeny, Iowa; secretary, Joy Holden of Eldridge, Iowa; and treasurer, Glenda Carpenter of Des Moines, Iowa.

The next annual meeting will be held at Crestwood Baptist Church, Des Moines, October 3-4, 1980.

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Symposium Explores  
World Hunger Solutions

By Debbie Stewart

FORT DAVIS, Texas (BP)--The compelling urgency of nourishing the world's billion hungry people was the common denominator for 75 Southern Baptists at an agri-missions symposium at Indian Lodge State Park here.

People who represent different organizations in hunger and development ministries in many nations talked with each other for five days about how understanding and sharing of information can be part of the solution and not part of the problem in world hunger relief.

The agri-missions symposium was sponsored by the Southern Baptist Convention's Foreign Mission Board and Texas Baptist Men and the Rio Grande River Ministry of the Baptist General Convention of Texas. Participants included representatives of the SBC Brotherhood Commission, SBC Christian Life Commission, several small hunger-related groups, churches and individuals.

Among those individuals were two former SBC presidents, Jimmy R. Allen of Texas and Owen Cooper of Mississippi; Jack Smith, a peach grower from Fredericksburg, Texas; and Abel Herrera, an agronomist from Mexico who works with Smith as a volunteer in agricultural ministries on the Rio Grande.

Eugene Grubbs, consultant for laymen overseas and relief ministries for the Foreign Mission Board, said the agri-missions symposium developed "confidence and community" among Southern Baptists working in hunger relief and agricultural missions. "There's developing a sense of community that could not have happened if we had not met together like this in a mutual exchange of information," he said.

Grubbs was the resource person for a symposium work group on "The Logistics of Working Together in Relationships and Lay Involvement." His office of three consultants and six secretaries has coordinated 3,500 laymen in short-term overseas missions projects and about \$2 million in relief and world hunger offerings during 1979. Grubbs stressed his desire for the Foreign Mission Board's relief and laymen overseas office to be an information center and facilitator between career missionaries and lay volunteers and contributors.

He added: "Our missionaries have a groundswell desire to respond creatively to what they feel is the leadership of the Holy Spirit in the United States," which they feel will be the source of additional career missions personnel and increased missions offerings.

Mary Futrell, professor of home economics at Mississippi State University, spoke on "The Role of Women in Nutritional and Agricultural Development."

She has taught women what foods to buy at their own village market to feed their families a balanced diet. She has worked with women in Panama, India, Haiti, and is scheduled to go to China in 1980.

Mrs. Futrell said that agricultural missions fail in some societies because of "western-oriented, stereotyped ideas about the sex of the farmer.

"It seems inconceivable that women's contribution to agriculture could be overlooked, and yet this is precisely what has happened," Mrs. Futrell said. "All the modern tools and techniques, fertilizers, credit and schools have been steered into large scale agriculture taught to men, while women have been left to struggle in their rain fed fields."

James Philpot, agricultural missionary in Mexico, presented a paper on "Ways That Agri-Missions Won't Work." He said that agricultural missions must be "in line with the Genesis account of creation.

"God began with the heavens and the earth, then came the dry land," Philpot said. "Today we too must begin with the soil, its reclamation, conservation and utilization."

Grubbs said that compassionate action to help nourish hungry people is an honored tradition, not "an emotional spasm," for Southern Baptists.

The convention's offering for foreign missions is named for Lottie Moon, a missionary to China in the 19th century. "Lottie Moon ties the Foreign Mission Board into ministries of famine and suffering," Grubbs said. "Lottie Moon died of malnutrition after giving what food she had to feed people on the mission field."

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Cauthen Urges Retirees  
To "End It With a Shout"

By Mary Jane Welch

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RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--With his own retirement less than three months away, Baker J. Cauthen told a group of 10 retiring missionaries honored at the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board to "end it with a shout."

Noting that the honorees were part of his own mission generation, the board's executive director compared the difficulties of missionary service to the "miry bog" from which God lifted the writer of Psalm 40. He told the missionaries there must come a day of ending.

"And how do you end it? You end it with a shout--the shout of thanksgiving, the shout of confidence in your Lord, the shout of victory that God has achieved and is achieving his purpose, the shout that comes, that lets you know there's more yet to come, that brighter things are yet ahead."

He recalled that two of the group, Mr. and Mrs. H. W. Schweinsberg, were in the missions class that gave him a clock when he resigned as their professor at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas, to become a missionary in China in 1939. The Schweinsbergs, who began Baptist work in Colombia, served 38 years there and in Spain.

The missionaries shared experiences illustrating the diversity of their service. Elizabeth Truly said she was one of those "strange people" who spend all their years of service in one place. For 40 years, she taught at the Baptist Women's College in Abeokuta, Nigeria. Hundreds of her girls, she said, now serve in the Baptist convention and in the schools and churches of Nigeria.

In contrast, Miriam Willis spent 36 years in five different countries. Trained as a nurse, she started a clinic in Asuncion, Paraguay, which became the first Baptist hospital in Latin America. There also, Cauthen said, she gave the nursing profession dignity in a country where she was told "good girls" didn't become nurses. After service in Paraguay, Argentina, Gaza and Yemen, Miss Willis spent her last years planting churches in the Dominican Republic.

Retirees related experiences ranging from inspiring to funny. A Muslim girl in one of her classes, said Miss Truly, turned her head to the wall and refused to listen to Bible lessons on instructions from her father. But touched by the words of the apostle Paul one day, she accepted Christ as her savior and then went straight home and brought her father back to hear the same message.

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A language mix-up in one of his Japanese weddings turned out for the best said William R. Medling, who with his wife spent 33 years in Japan, where he had grown up as the son of missionaries.

Instead of asking the couple if they would stay with each other in sickness and in health, he asked them to stay together in sickness and in fighting. A month later when the wife came to him after a terrible fight with her husband, he reminded her of her vow. As it turned out, he said, they had much more fighting than sickness.

Since his work involved traveling to many different churches each month for services, he said he eventually mastered the language by preaching the same sermon eight different times.

Other missionaries honored were Frances Hammett, who served 29 years in Nigeria and Tanzania; Dr. and Mrs. William J. Williams, who served 30 years in Nigeria; and Darline Elliott, who served 36 years in Colombia.

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Trentham Denies Stories  
Of Moral Improprieties

By Stan Haste

Baptist Press  
10/9/79

WASHINGTON (BP)--Charles A. Trentham, pastor of the First Baptist Church here, has vigorously denied any wrongdoing in his relationship with a young woman in the church.

Trentham, in an exclusive interview with Baptist Press, also denied reports that the relationship began after the 26-year-old woman came to him for counseling. The woman "never sought and never received counseling from the pastor," he declared.

The church's deacons voted 27-11 on Oct. 3 to recommend to the congregation that Trentham's contract as senior minister not be renewed when it expires next February.

The vote followed a recommendation by the deacons' pastoral staff committee that the 60-year-old pastor of President Jimmy Carter be terminated in part because of his two divorces and what the committee called his "poor judgment by becoming involved with a young woman of the congregation who is also divorced."

Numerous news accounts of the action have intimated that some question remains about the moral propriety of the relationship. Trentham denied the reports, declaring, "I am not a philanderer."

He noted that when he was called as pastor of the church in January 1974 the church had full knowledge of his first divorce, which occurred during his tenure as pastor of the First Baptist Church, Knoxville, Tenn.

Even after his second divorce, Trentham said, he received approval of his deacons to remain as pastor. At the time, he was quoted as saying that First Baptist "does not shoot its wounded soliders."

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Both the chairman of deacons, Bill McBeath, and the chairwoman of the pastoral staff committee which brought the recommendation that the contract not be renewed dissented from the action. McBeath went so far as to offer his resignation as chairman, saying he could not in good conscience present the resolution on termination to the church on Nov. 28, when the congregation is scheduled to take up the matter. Only eight of the deacons, however, voted to accept McBeath's resignation.

Frank McAnear, moderator of the church, supported Trentham's denial of impropriety, telling the Washington Post that "no one has ever accused him of any violation of morals." Former moderator Robin Clack also came to Trentham's defense in a statement reported by the Washington Star. "I worked closely with him for three years and found him highly professional and ethical and concerned about the church," Clack said. "Since when does a minister give up his private life?"

Milton Jones, former deacon chairman and chairman of the selection committee which recommended Trentham as pastor six years ago, said that the effort to oust him has been spearheaded by six "life deacons," a group of older members of the deacon body. They initially presented the pastor with a demand that the relationship end and that the woman leave the church.

Trentham acknowledged that while he initially agreed to the demands, he later reconsidered and chose to ignore them. The life deacons then came back accusing him of breaking his promise and demanding his resignation by the end of last summer.

Some of the life deacons, along with other church members, also expressed displeasure with his co-sponsorship of a group called "Meeting of Peacemakers" which until recently met weekly in the church building to discuss issues relating to war and peace, including disarmament.

Trentham told the life deacons that he would comply with their request and offer his resignation, effective next February when his contract ends.

Upon reporting his decision to McBeath, however, the chairman of deacons objected to the propriety of the life deacons' actions, questioning their authority to take matters into their hands. McBeath then advised Trentham against resigning. Trentham again reconsidered and decided not to resign.

The life deacons then launched a telephone campaign among all active deacons seeking his ouster.

Trentham also told Baptist Press that he is convinced that majorities on both the pastoral staff committee and the deacons had made up their minds to seek the termination before the matter came to a head.

He expressed the hope that the majority of the congregation is "weary" of the controversy and will overrule the deacons' action.

Although insisting he has "been put at a great disadvantage" because of the "garbled reports" of the controversy, Trentham said he sees himself as "the unifier of the church." He said that he "cannot get into divisive quarreling over a domestic issue" in the church.

"I must look forward to the time when beyond this turmoil there can be healing," he went on. "Consequently, I am not challenging statements made by my adversaries." Trentham said further, "There have been far more times than most people could imagine that I have chosen to forgive rather than to reply to accusations."